

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-34 are pending in this application. Claims 27-34 are added by the present response. Claims 1, 3, 5, 7, 13, 15, 17, 19, 25, and 26 are allowed. Claims 2, 4, 6, 8-12, 14, 16, 18, and 20-24 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph. Those claims 2, 4, 6, 8-12, 14, 16, 18, and 20-24 were noted as allowable if rewritten or amended to overcome the rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Applicants initially gratefully acknowledge the early indication of the allowable subject matter in each of claims 1-26.

Addressing now the rejection of claims 2, 4, 6, 8-12, 14, 16, 18, and 20-24 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, that rejection is traversed by the present response. More specifically, the above-noted claims are amended by the present response to clarify the language therein.

With respect to claims 2, 6, 14, and 18, those claims were rejected as the phrase “wherein a distance between adjacent grids to be started to set the threshold values for the halftone cells is made as equal as possible” was noted as unclear.

In response to that rejection each of the above-noted claims is amended to now recite “wherein a distance between respective threshold value setting start pixels in adjacent halftone cells is made as equal as possible”. That subject matter is believed to clarify the claim language and is believed to be fully supported by the original specification, see for example Figure 2 in the present specification and the description thereof at page 8, line 26 et seq.

As shown in Figure 2, the pixels noted by the black square are pixels of a start point for threshold value setting. Each halftone cell 1 contains such a threshold value setting start pixel. Further, in the feature noted in the above-noted claims those threshold value start

setting pixels, again the pixels noted by the black squares for example in Figure 2, are separated by a distance that is as equal as possible. The above-noted claim amendments are believed to clarify the noted claim language and to address the rejection of claims 2, 6, 14, and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

With respect to claims 9 and 21, those claims were rejected as it was unclear whether the dividing was carried out on each of the individual hexagonal cells or on the combination of plural hexagonal cells that form the single halftone cell. In response to that rejection each of claims 9 and 21 is amended by the present response to now recite “dividing an interior of each of said respective hexagonal cells to form respective sub-matrices”. That claim language is also believed to be supported by the original specification for example at page 10, lines 20-24. The above-noted amendments to claims 9 and 21 are believed to address the rejection of those claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

It is also noted that claim 8 is amended by the present response to correct for a minor typographical error.

In such ways, each of the above-noted claims is believed to be in full compliance with all requirements under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

The present response also sets forth new claims 27-34 for examination, which are believed to also patentably distinguish over the applied art. New independent claim 27 is similar to a combination of original claims 1 and 2 except that new independent claim 27 recites “wherein respective threshold value setting start pixels in adjacent halftone cells are not aligned in either horizontal or vertical directions”. That subject matter is supported by the original specification at page 8, lines 28-30, as a non-limiting example.

Again with respect to Figure 2 in the present specification, the black squares show threshold value setting start pixels in adjacent halftone cells, and those respective threshold value settings start pixels in adjacent halftone cells are not aligned in either the horizontal or

vertical directions. Such further subject matter is now set forth in new claims 27-34. New claims 27-34 are also believed to be allowable as those claims are in fact more narrow than in the allowed claims 1-26.

As no other issues are pending in this application, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is now in condition for allowance, and it is hereby respectfully requested that this case be passed to issue.

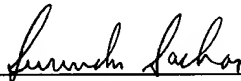
Respectfully submitted,

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